





# Suspicious Powder Incident Lessons Learned

WA Department of Corrections

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# Background

- 9 story building, 400 staff
- mixture of offices and open cubicles
- 2 elevators and 2 stair exits
- HVAC service
- mailroom and individual floor mail service
- training and emergency plans

# The incident

- White powder, addressee, and content of letter
- Isolation, clean-up, notification
- Communication w/outside agencies
- Incident Command
- Decisions made independently

# Priorities

- Staff directly involved
- Prevent panic of non-involved staff
- Identify, remove, and clean up material
- Information to staff
- Media
- Crime scene
- Prosecution

# What Happened / Murphy Factor

- initial response
- isolate and contain
- notification
- incident command
- media escort
- HAZMAT team attire
- a civilian hour
- alternate sites
- somewhat proper
- timely
- the place
- the plan
- wrong location
- WMD team arrival
- is four military hours
- moving vehicles

# What we learned ...

- It's not as easy as it sounds
  - isolation, clean-up, communication
- You have to make more than one phone call
  - police, fire, GA, multiple agencies
- Verification of threat - other agencies
- If you haven't done it - chances are neither have they
- It's a mess but not in ways you expected

# What we learned...

- The incident was not just at HQ
- Clean up right away, keep the incident site small
- Evacuation is not always the right answer
- Media-one voice, one message
- Working with other agencies
- ICS
- Proactive communication



# What we learned...

- Managing the people
- Manage the situation
- Have updated telephone lists
- Excellent chance to troubleshoot
- Informational briefings “read” to staff
- Good learning opportunity for future
- Use resources

# What we would do different

- Manage the people more aggressively
- Give more frequent updates even if there is no new information
- Evaluate need for quicker lockdown process and practice
- Be more vigilant
- Increase preventative measures (location and process)

# What next?

- Make an action plan
- Complete items on the action plan before the next emergency
- Train and exercise
- Continuous education